

The Garden Corner

By: Art Kammerlohr

Master Gardeners of Johnson County Missouri

The days are getting longer and warmer temperatures are beginning to appear on the extended forecast. Spring isn't far off – yippee! March is a transition month in the garden and gives all of us the extra time we need to get ready for this year's growing season. If you are like me and are chomping at the bit to get outdoors and get busy, there's plenty to do – here are some things to consider.

Let's talk lawns first. If the ground is soggy, stay off of it. By working on a soggy lawn, you unnecessarily compact the soil and cripple the absorption rate of nutrients going to grass roots. When the soil is relatively dry, apply your spring feeding fertilizer – I use Weed and Feed. When the temperatures are above 60 degrees, you can spray for weeds – I use Weed b Gone. If your lawn hasn't been aerated in several years, you might want to consider doing this yourself or hiring it done.

Thanks to the unusually warm days in February, the spring bulbs have sent their leaves up through the soil. That's ok. Unless their flower buds are close to opening, they will withstand the overnight drops of the thermometer. Now is a good time to feed your spring flowers – I use both bone meal and 10-10-10 fertilizer.

What about the vegetable garden? When the soil can be worked – not soggy – it's time to till in your soil amendments: aged manure, compost, leaf mold, and peat moss are all great additions to not only your vegetable beds but your flower beds too. And, while we're talking about flower beds, now is the time to (UGH!) do the first thorough weeding. Do it now; or, suffer later – up to you!

If there are pruning projects remaining, do those now before the trees begin to bud out. Don't forget to apply Dormant Oil to counteract the hatching of tent caterpillars. Some plants have specific times to be pruned. If you are not sure, give me a holler and I'll let you know.

Do you have a compost bin? With the warming temperatures, it will begin the magic of producing "black gold" again. Turning the compost will help to get things started. I always add a good hand full of fertilizer for good measure.

And, let's don't forget our feathered friends. If you have bird houses, it's time to clean out the old nesting material so they can begin their annual cycle. Some folks swab the interior of the houses with a one part bleach and three parts water solution to combat mites and other critters. To be honest, I've never done this; but, it is recommended.

Any questions/comments/suggestions? Write: 370 NW 121 Rd., Warrensburg, Missouri 64093 or email: maandpak@embargmail.com and I'll get right back with you. One final thought: We've just come through winter and haven't been exerting ourselves as much – start slow and easy so you'll be around when the 4th of July barbeque needs your help!